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INDONESIA – ON A DANGEROUS PATH

Southeast Asia & Islam's beacon is losing its glow

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The following is rather unbelievable to comprehend; however, somehow this absurdity is reality in present day Indonesia. This past month, the Indonesian judicial system somehow handed down a verdict to murderers (who were caught on video!) sentences ranging from 5 to 7 months. One of the victims who was defending himself and his fellow villagers received a sentence equal to that of the murderers!

In the words of Andreas Harsono, of the New York-based Human Rights Watch, this is the Talibanization of Indonesia.

To recap, last February a mob of about 1500 extremists – many brandishing machetes, spears and sticks – attacked a village in the town of Cikeusik, Pandeglang in the Banten province on Indonesia's main island of Java. Approximately twenty people became the main targets. *The reason for the attack?* The extremists believed that these 20 people were deviant in their beliefs. The extremists are so-called Muslims. The 20 attacked believers are also Muslim, who belong to the Ahmadi Muslim Community.

The result from the attack was that three Ahmadi Muslim men were brutally beaten and killed with many simply standing there and witnessing the murders in public. Many other Ahmadi Muslim believers were injured. An amateur video obtained by Human Rights Watch captured the entire incident, including the brutal beating and killing of two of the three Ahmadi Muslims. The video, which also appears on YouTube, also showed two police trucks parked outside the attacked house. Apparently 30 officers were present and essentially did nothing to dissuade the violence.

Indonesia was supposed to be Southeast Asia shining light. Indonesia is the fourth largest populace in the world and is the world's largest Muslim majority nation. When Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was re-elected as President in his second term on July 8th,

2009, _Time World_ stated that Indonesia has cemented its status as Southeast Asia's political role model. _Time_ further stated that democracy and Islam need not be incompatible. Furthermore, Investment Banking Company, _Morgan Stanley_ has suggested that perhaps Indonesia be entered into the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) club of rising nations because of its solid economic growth. _So what has happened? Why is Indonesia slipping and being set back as a democratic nation?_

Simply, the grownups have not stood up! President SBY needs to let the world know that Indonesian's transformation from a dictatorship under Suharto from over a decade ago was a real change and that Indonesia will not let extremists lead their country down the path of other hijacked Islamic nations that feed terror to the world. Simply Indonesia's leaders have to stop being timid and show some boldness. Their silence and inaction only allow the radical extremists to become more brazen in their so-called cleansings. Politics needs to be put aside and justice needs to prevail. If Indonesia is truly to be the inspirational beacon of Southeast Asia and for Islam, then its leaders need to speak out. We have already seen what the silence has done. It has turned the investigators of crime and the judicial system mute. If President SBY is concerned of appeasing the radicals and losing popularity, then of course the justice system will take his lead.

Indonesia's judicial system and President Yudhoyono should take note of the dangerous precedent they have set for their country. You have jailed a man who was defending himself and his fellow villagers. At the same time you have provided a full blanket of protection and promotion of heinous acts to extremists who would rather see Indonesia turn the clock back and become another Afghanistan. As a result, mobsters this past Sunday attacked another Ahmadi Mosque in South Sulawesi. The extremists do not fear retribution, as they claim to have God on their side (along with President Yudhoyono and the Indonesian Judicial system).

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